



N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources

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Contact: Chris Frazier
Phone: (919) 715-6515

Two Gastonia City Agencies Receive Recognition As 2009 Environmental Stewards

RALEIGH — The N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources today recognized both the city of Gastonia Water Supply and Treatment Division and its Crowders Creek Water Resource Recovery Facility as 2009 Environmental Stewards.

The state's Environmental Stewardship Initiative, designed to promote and encourage superior environmental performance by North Carolina's regulated community, began in 2002. An "Environmental Steward" is an organization that has demonstrated environmental leadership through its commitment to exemplary environmental performance beyond what is required by regulation. As an Environmental Steward, the organization commits to reporting annually on its environmental performance.

The award recognizes both of these Gastonia agencies' superior environmental performance, commitment to continued reduction of their environmental impacts and demonstrated commitment to exceed compliance. These agencies join the city of Gastonia's Long Creek Water Resource Recovery facility at the highest level of the ESI program. The Long Creek facility achieved Steward status in 2004.

"The city of Gastonia has not only shown a commitment to comply with regulations but has also established programs and activities that go beyond regulatory requirements," said DENR Secretary Dee Freeman. "Its facilities serve as an example for other public utilities in the state, and I encourage other organizations in North Carolina to consider the city of Gastonia as a role model."

A 12-member advisory board appointed by the DENR Secretary provides program direction and implementation and recommended the Gastonia facilities be selected as Environmental Stewards. Advisory board membership consists of individuals from industry, industry trade groups, environmental and citizen nongovernmental organizations, government, academia and small business. (Advisory board members are listed on p. 2.)

Reasons cited by the advisory board in its selection of the city of Gastonia Water Supply and Treatment Division include:

- The facility works with county and state agencies on drought committees and regional planning.
- The division assists other towns and cities with their testing and monitoring.
- Through the Citizen's Volunteer Water Quality Testing Program, citizens can volunteer to have the city test the water at their home, which provides further evidence to the facility of its water quality upon reaching the customer. The division currently tests approximately 1,700 samples per year.
- From 2003 through 2008, the water treatment plant met the requirements for EPA's Area Wide Optimization Program, designed to help water systems meet more stringent regulations and achieve higher levels of water quality.
- The facility no longer uses the industry-standard chlorine on-site. The replacement chemical is cheaper, more efficient and better for the environment than chlorine, and allows Gastonia to meet and go beyond regulatory requirements.
- The water treatment plant reduced its wash water usage by more than 25 percent over a two-year period by reducing the frequency of and using less water when backwashing its filters.

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Office of Public Affairs
Phone: (919) 715-4112
3060
1601 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-1601

Diana Kees, Communications Director
FAX (919) 715-

diana.kees@ncdenr.gov

The advisory board cites the following reasons for its selection of the city of Gastonia Crowders Creek Water Resource Recovery Facility:

- In 2003, the facility changed the process for introducing carbon into the wastewater treatment process. The introduction of carbon is an important part of the process for nutrient removal from the wastewater. Crowders Creek found an alternative carbon source that was once a waste material from a nearby industrial process. This waste material is now beneficially reused in this facility rather than being discarded.
- Sewer pipe blockages due to fats, oil and grease being put into drains are a common problem for water treatment plants. Crowders Creek's blockages due to fats, oils and grease have decreased by 68 percent over the last seven years due to an aggressive educational campaign.
- During the winter months, the facility went beyond the requirements of its permit by removing greater amounts of nitrogen from its discharge into Crowders Creek, improving its environmental footprint.
- Gastonia has partnered with Gaston County law enforcement and Home Instead Senior Care on a Prescription Collection Program – Operation Medicine Cabinet - for proper disposal of expired drugs to keep them from being disposed of in the collection system, and out of the environment.

“As the first municipal Environmental Steward, the city of Gastonia is very proud to now have all three of our treatment facilities gain that designation,” said Matt Bernhardt, Gastonia's director of public works and utilities. “We are very proud of the outstanding staff of each of these facilities for their hard work and for the standards of quality and excellence shown by this award. We also appreciate the continued support of our city council, manager and citizens in pursuit of these goals.”

The ESI program has two additional levels of participation and recognition: Environmental Partner and Rising Environmental Steward. The Environmental Partner level is designed for adoption by a broad range of organizations that are interested in beginning the process of developing a systematic approach to improving their environmental performance. Partners must demonstrate a commitment to maintain compliance, commit to establishing an environmental management system and set environmental performance goals. The Environmental Rising Steward level is recommended to organizations that have a mature environmental management system in place and have set site-specific measurable environmental performance goals.

For more detailed information or to apply for the program, please visit the Environmental Stewardship Initiative Web site at <http://www.p2pays.org/esi> or contact Angela Barger or Lisa Shanklin with the N.C. Division of Pollution Prevention and Environmental Assistance at (919) 715-6500 or esi@ncdenr.gov.

2009 Advisory Workgroup Members

Jennifer Adams	Corning Inc.
Katy Ansardi	Sustainable North Carolina
Kristin Beck	Progress Energy
Jack Blackmer	Novozymes North America Inc.
Dr. Robert Bruck	North Carolina State University
Eric Henry	TS Designs
Preston Howard Jr.	MCIC
Gary Hunt (chair)	Dept. of Environment and Natural Resources
Kimberly Killian	GKN Driveline
Dan Miller	Fleet Readiness Center East
Arlene Roman	City of Gastonia
Robin Smith	Conservation Council of NC

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